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ABSTRACT

An exploration of the process by which newly hired high school principals learn instructional leadership roles is presented in this paper, which focuses on the effect of faculty and superintendent expectations on principals' leadership behavior. A triangularized methodology includes indepth interviews with new principals, (n=28) from a midwestern state, observation, and document analysis. The findings indicate that both supervisors and teachers influence principals' instructional leadership behavior. A second conclusion is that principals receive strong, consistent messages to become involved with student personnel issues. Third, teachers limit principals' power in areas of curriculum development and staff personnel issues. Finally, selection interviews convey powerful messages to principals about job expectations. Suggestions for improving the new principals' socialization process include: (1) identification of school needs and evaluation of the principal's role prior to the selection process; (2) involvement of teachers in the development of the selection process; and (3) the creation of a principal socialization committee after selection. District norms and expectations often do not promote instructional leadership in the areas of staff personnel functions. The organizational socialization of principals must be balanced, unambiguous, and explicit. (23 references) (LMI)

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The Organizational Socialization of High School Principals: A Description and Analysis

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The instructional leadership role of the principal has received enormous attention over the last decade. The emergent consensus is that the principal's primary role is that of instructional leader (Block, 1983; Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, Hurwitz; 1984). Unfortunately, however, the prescription does not match the reality. Bartell and Willis (1987) describe the state of instructional leadership in schools by stating, "an overwhelming body of research indicates that most secondary school principals are not perceived as fulfilling this primary responsibility [instructional leadership]." This condition has long been recognized in the literature on the role of the principal. And many have pointed out the need for more resources if principals are going to be able to function as instructional leaders (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Gies, 1986; Roe & Drake, 1980).

We also have a body of literature which describes the work of effective principals, and deems certain skills as important to effective instructional leadership (Gorton & McIntyre, 1978; Manasse, 1985; Smith & Andrews, 1989). Research on effective principals describes how exemplary instructional leaders behave but offers little explanation of how to promote instructional leadership within varying school contexts. And this is a key to improving instructional leadership in the schools. Understanding how contextual factors influence instructional leadership may provide insight into ways to improve principals' instructional leadership. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) note the importance of school context, and recognize how little it is considered when discussing principals' work:

> Common sense, as well as numerous studies, confirm that contextual variables such as organizational size, staff characteristics, technology, and environment influence the nature

of organizational leadership.

Despite this development, research in educational administration has paid relatively little attention to the impact of the organization on school administrators. (p. 179)

Blumberg & Greenfield (1980) also note that contextual variables may influence instructional leadership: "The informal learning that occurs as people enact these various roles is probably a major influence shaping their capabilities as a principal." (p. 258) Addressing the question of how to promote effective instructional leadership within varying school contexts is the next step in relating effective principal research to school improvement. It is time to connect what we know about effective principals with what we can learn about how school context influences principals' leadership behavior.

Organizational socialization theory (London, 1985; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) provides a framework for studying how principals' instructional leadership behavior may be shaped and influenced by school context. Van Maanen & Schein (1979) characterize organizational socialization as a process that is "highly contingent and contextual." (p. 212) London (1985) defines this experience as,

> ... the process by which an employee learns the values, norms, and required behaviors that permit participation as a member of the organization. This process may also mean relinquishing attitudes, values and behaviors that do not fit. Socialization establishes shared attitudes, habits, and values that encourage cooperation, integrity, and communication. (p. 20)

Defined in this way, organizational socialization establishes a fit between the values and priorities of the organization and those of the individual. Implicit in this definition is the idea that new

organizational members are influenced by the norms and expectations of organizational incumbents. And these norms and expectations are important elements of school contexts.

A better understanding of how the expectations of teachers and superintendents influence principals may improve the likelihood that new principals will be appropriately socialized. This is a particularly important issue today because nearly 60 percent of today's principals will be replaced during this decade (Anderson, 1988).

A recent study explored the ways newly hired high school principals learn their instructional leadership roles. This paper reports the findings of that study by describing and analyzing principals' perceptions of how faculty and superintendent expectations influenced their instructional leadership behavior.

In this study, the concept of instructional leadership is defined by applying three of Lipham and Hoeh's (1974) functions of the principal to their definition of leadership. The three *instructional* functions of the principal pertain to (1) staff personnel, (2) curriculum development, and (3) student personnel. The *non-instructional* functions identified by Lipham and Hoeh (1974) pertain to the management of the physical plant, business operations, and community relations. The ways principals were organizationally socialized into their *non-instructional* roles were not studied.

Lipham and Hoeh (1974), define leadership as,

> that behavior of an individual which initiates a new structure in interaction with a social system; it initiates change in the goals, objectives, configurations, procedures, input, processes, and ultimately the outputs of social systems. (p. 19)

Accordingly, "instructional leadership" is defined as change and initiation of new structures in the performance of the principal's school staff functions, curriculum development functions, and student personnel functions.

Methodology

Twenty-eight high school principals hired in one midwestern state during the summer of 1987 were asked to participate in this study. Of these, eleven males in their first principalship agreed to be interviewed three times. Data collection occurred between November and April of the participants' second years in their schools.

The first interview with the principals focused on how superintendent expectations influenced their instructional leadership behavior. The second interview focused on how teacher expectations influenced their instructional leadership behavior. The third interview focused on how principals' instructional leadership philosophies mediated their socialization experiences.

All eleven superintendents were also interviewed, as were key teachers in the sample schools. Key teachers were identified by the principals as those who were either formal or informal faculty leaders. Interviews with superintendents and teachers triangulated data collected in the interviews with principals (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

The five interviews conducted in each of the sample districts comprise the bulk of the data. Other data were collected through observations in the schools and examinations of school board

policy manuals, principals' job descriptions, teacher union master contracts, and teacher handbooks. The data collected by analyzing these documents also triangulated interview data (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Sample Schools and Districts

The sample districts were predominantly small, single-high school districts. Ten of the schools had fewer than 600 students. The eleventh school was a large, urban high school with more than 1,500 students.

The sizes of the administrative staffs, of course, corresponded to student enrollments. The large, urban high school employed several assistant principals; but, of the other ten schools, only two had assistant principals. The remaining eight schools, had fewer than 400 students and no assistant principals.

Furthermore, by being more than 20 miles from urban areas, or by being in regions where farming and agri-business played a major role in local economies, all eight of these smallest schools were in districts that qualify as rural. Two of the eight smallest districts were in transition from rural to suburban, but at the time of the study they were more rural than suburban.

In the numbering system used throughout the data presentation and analysis, the smallest eight schools are numbered one through eight. The small city high schools with one assistant principal are numbered nine and ten. The large, urban high school is numbered eleven. Table 1 illustrates

the use of the numbering system and the sizes of the sample schools.

Table 1

Descriptions of Sample Schools

School Numbers	Characteristics
Numbers 1 - 8	single-high school district rural fewer than 400 students no assistant principals
Numbers 9 and 10	single-high school district rural/small city between 400 and 600 students one assistant principal
Number 11	multiple-high school district urban more than 1,500 students four assistant principals racially mixed

Findings

Principals reports of the ways their instructional leadership had been influenced are described and analyzed in three sections. Superintendent influences are described in the first section, followed by a description of teacher influences. The third section focuses on the messages principals received during their candidate interviews.

Superintendent Influences

During the first interview, principals were asked to describe how superintendent expectations influenced their instructional leadership behavior. The following behavior patterns were reported by 55% (six) of the principals.

The first effect was that principals increased their time on student discipline and attendance (3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 11). Principal 5 said the district norm was that the principal is in charge of discipline and attendance. He said this expectation influenced his behavior in the following way:

> I know it [discipline and attendance] has to be taken care of early in the day. Otherwise, all kinds of bad things happen. I work hard at attendance and discipline. I don't let anything slip.

Principal 8 said he received messages about attendance and discipline on his evaluation and during conversations with the superintendent. He described how he handled discipline and attendance concerns:

> I've tended to stress attendance this year--to spend more time with it. I've become defensive with discipline. I need to continually talk about the reason why we need to

discipline students my way.

Second, 55 percent of the principals (2, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 11) focused their efforts on building a positive school climate. For example, Principal 9 said,

> The superintendent talks freely about the student services area... I did a "climate check" in my first year, and then developed a 3-point plan. The superintendent has given positive feedback on that.

Third, 55 percent of the principals (1, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 11) said superintendent expectations prompted them to become more involved with extra curricular activities. These expectations also came from board members, whose messages reflected specific community attitudes toward different extra-curricular programs.

Fourth, six principals (55%; 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 10) reported that the positive feedback they received from their superintendents helped them continue to work hard for their schools. Principal 7 said the positive feedback he received, "always gives you the fuel to keep going and doing things, more willing and more receptive to do extras."

On the other hand, the fifth behavior reported by 55 percent (2, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9) of the principals was that they resisted superintendent influences. Principal 2 said, "The superintendent's and my attitude toward attendance and discipline are diametrically opposed, but I haven't gotten any mandates or edicts imposed on me."

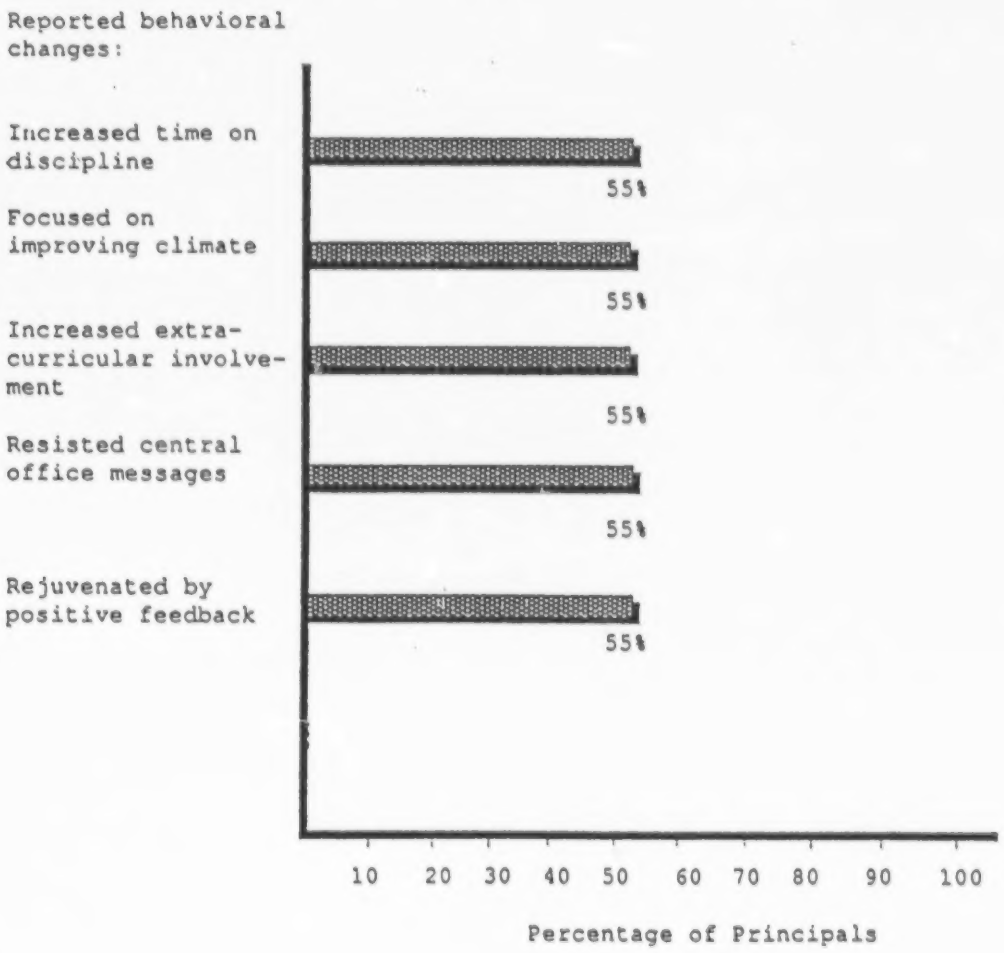
Similarly, Principal 4 resisted taking a disciplinary approach to teacher relations. Referring to the superintendent's expectations, he said, "I'm supposed to be a hammer, not a leader." He also

reported that administrative meetings clarified the superintendent's expectations for teacher supervision, but he did not accept them.

Figure 1 summarizes principals' reports of the ways their behavior had been influenced by their superintendents. The behavioral effects are listed down the left hand column. The bars represent the percentage of principals who reported each particular effect on behavior.

Figure 1

Principals' Reports of the Ways Central Office Expectations Affected their Behavior



In summary, these reports indicate that superintendent expectations influenced principals' instructional leadership behavior. Based on new principals' perceptions of superintendents' expectations, however, this often meant focusing on student personnel functions. For nine of the eleven principals (82%, all but 8 and 10), principals perceived the strongest expectations in the area of student personnel functions. Only in four schools (3, 5, 10, and 11) did principals report that superintendent expectations prompted them to go beyond minimum requirements in developing curriculum, finding effective staffing patterns, reviewing test data with teachers, promoting staff development activities, or supervising classroom instruction. In the other seven schools, the expectation was for principals to meet minimum expectations in these areas and focus most of their attention on student personnel functions.

Even regarding student personnel functions, superintendents did not promote *leadership*, which might have involved such things as policy revision and developing strategies to involve many school personnel in enforcement efforts. Instead these principals were influenced to increase their time enforcing student behavior and attendance policies and to become more involved in extra-curricular activities.

Teacher Influences

During second interviews, principals were asked to describe how messages from teachers influenced their instructional leadership behavior. The behavioral influences reported in these

interviews were similar to the influences reported during the interviews concerning superintendent expectations.

Principals in 55 percent of the schools reported the following three ways that teachers' expectations influenced their instructional leadership behavior: (1) six principals said they worked hard on discipline and attendance (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 11), (2) six principals tried to change teacher attitudes (2, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 11), and (3) six principals became more accessible to their teachers (1, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11).

Principal 5 was one who worked hard on discipline and attendance. He said most of his time was spent dealing with student personnel issues. He noted, "In terms of handling tough situations with kids, and consistent discipline, I am concerned that they [teachers] get the reinforcement and support they need."

Principal 6 also felt that teacher expectations for student discipline affected his behavior. Here is a case where the principal may not have wanted to enforce policies as strictly as he did, but teacher expectations shaped his behavior. Principal 6 reflected, "It bothers me. I try to nail kids harder than I would otherwise...I'm walking hallways more. I get involved more in discipline."

Principal 4 was another who worked hard on student discipline and attendance. When asked how teacher expectations for his involvement in student personnel matters affected his behavior, he replied,

> I spend more time with discipline and attendance than I think I have to; but, if I don't, it is going to get away from me. I set myself up as a hammer; now I'm paying the price for it.

> Now I'm expected to handle all the discipline. I'm slowly trying to work out of this by changing expectations. I'm not around as much. Teachers and students wanted me in the halls during passing time. The whole damn building became mine during those three minutes and the noon hour.

This principal's reference to changing expectations is also an example of trying to change teacher attitudes--the second behavior reported by six different principals. A comment from Principal 2 provides another example. He felt that teachers wanted him to be stricter with student attendance and discipline matters. He said,

> There is a fair percentage [of teachers] that thinks I should be more forceful in these areas [discipline and attendance]...Occasionally I have to sit down and have a talk with myself to remember where I'm coming from, and occasionally I have to talk with them to remind them of where I'm coming from, even though they don't like it.

Similarly, Principal 2 tried to change teacher attitudes about student grading policies. He said,

> They feel strongly that there are specific standards. Seventy percent passing is very important...They reject their responsibility for student achievement...the teachers feel the students are responsible for learning.

When asked how this affected his behavior, Principal 2 said, "I keep trying to bring it to their attention; but, from the bottom up, they take a punitive approach to everything."

Principal 10 tried to change teacher attitudes about the purposes of classroom observations. He said,

> [Teachers believe] They [observations] are for evaluation. I'm trying to change the emphasis to supervision...I've worked harder to emphasize supervision as a positive experience.

The third behavior reported by six principals (2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 11) was that they tried to be

more accessible to their faculties. Principal 7 said the following about how his "open door" policy affected his behavior:

> You keep this going because this [accessibility] is what they [teachers] want...I have to be accessible at all times...Classroom observations are sometimes cancelled or shortened. I can't always follow through on plans.

Similarly, Principal 11 said the dominant instructional leadership message from his teachers was that he assist them whenever necessary. When asked how this affected his behavior, he said, "I have to use my time wisely, because of the magnitude of the expectations--to bring closure in so many areas."

Three other behavior patterns, reportedly based on teacher expectations, were mentioned by 36 percent of the principals. The first behavior was that principals provided service to teachers (1, 2, 5, and 6). Principal 1 pointed out that he serves teachers' needs regarding change in school instructional programs:

> I've shouldered the burden for instructional change when I saw the need. It has affected the ways I spend my time. More of my time is consumed in things I would like to come from the teachers.

Second, four principals (36%) reported that they facilitated teachers' involvement in school decision making (3, 7, 10, and 11). Principal 3 reported that he is expected to be a resource to the teachers, and to provide time for them to discuss school issues. He commented, "I have learned to become more of a mediator, and less of a decision maker."

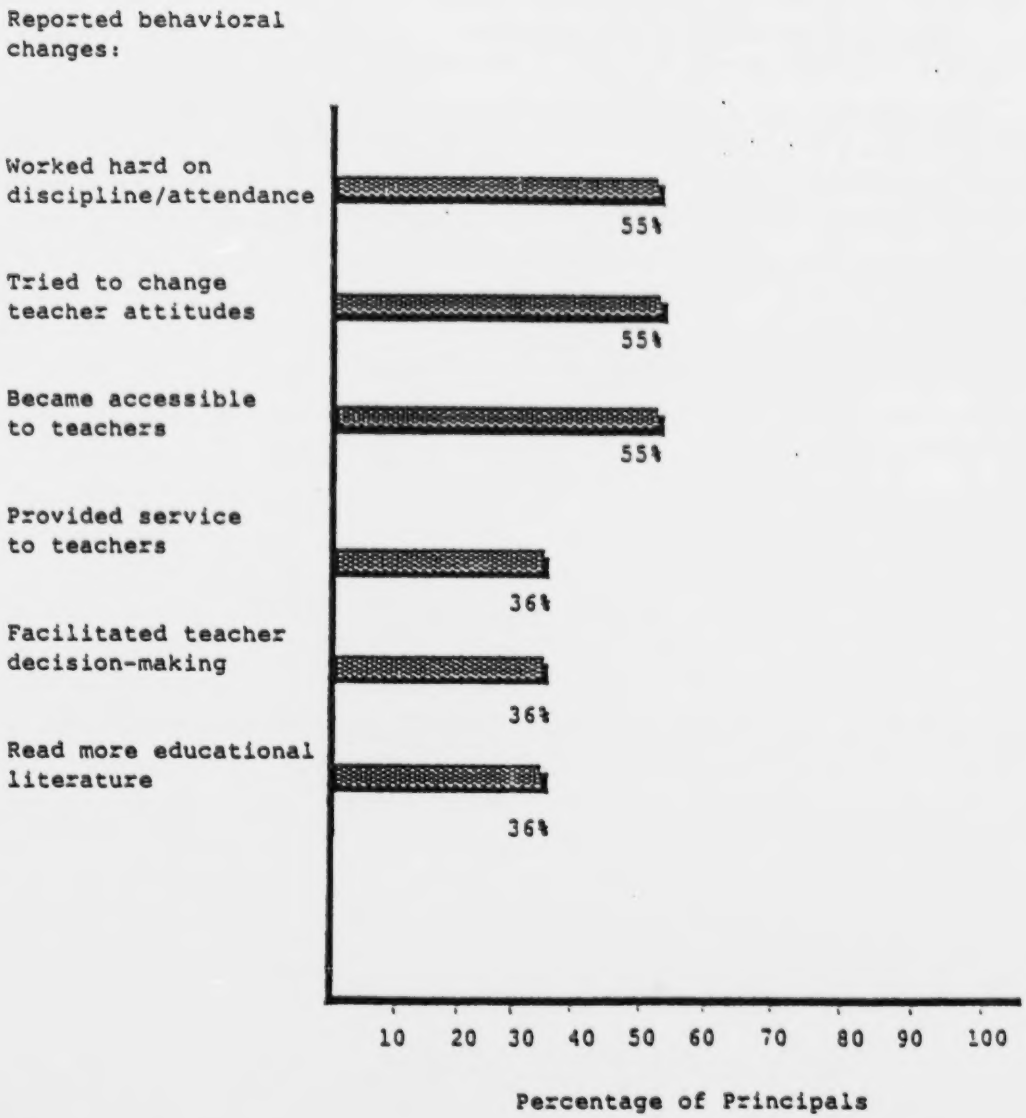
Third, as a result of teacher messages, 36 percent of the principals reported that they read more

to stay informed of educational issues and practices (5, 9, 10, and 11). Principal 11 noted that his teachers had an "above average" expectation for assistance with instructional resources. He reported that this affected his behavior. He said, "It makes me more cognizant that I must become a reader on, and developer of, instructional strategies."

Figure 2 summarizes principals' reports of the ways their behavior had been affected by teachers' expectations. The behavioral effects are listed down the left hand column. The bars represent the percentage of principals who reported each particular effect on behavior.

Figure 2

Principals' Reports of the Ways Teacher Expectations Affected Their Behavior



Similar to the expectations of superintendents, the expectations of teachers promoted involvement in student personnel functions. Once again, however, the focus was not on *leadership*, but on policy enforcement. Also similar to the expectations of superintendents, very few teacher messages concerned staff personnel functions and curriculum development functions. A comment from Principal 5 illustrates the norms in most of these districts: "regarding teacher-principal interaction, most is in student personnel, then in curriculum development, then in leading teachers."

Furthermore, teacher expectations regarding staff personnel and curriculum development areas, did not promote *leadership*. Instead, teachers expectations which influenced principals to share decision making, to read more educational literature, and to be accessible to teachers promoted service to teachers. Certainly providing for the needs of the faculty is an important aspect of the principal's role. But the point is that teacher norms focused primarily on service, not leadership.

Selection Process Influences

The first interviews with principals included questions about the selection process used to hire them. It became apparent from their responses that this was a time when they received clear messages about the instructional leadership expectations of other organizational members. Therefore, the third interviews with principals included discussions of the relative importance of their candidate interviews.

Ninety-one percent of the principals (all but 8) reported that selection process messages were influential. When asked how the messages they received affected their instructional leadership behavior, 55 percent (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 10) felt their qualifications and style complemented district needs. Principal 10 said, "It has been very reinforcing. I see myself as a people person. And knowing that is what they want has allowed me to be myself and feel comfortable to do the things I think need to be done."

One pattern emerged regarding the focus of the candidate interviews. Regardless of the specific qualifications, principals reported that, although they did not know it at the time, the weaknesses of the former principal were the focus of the interview. Eventually the newly hired principals perceived that these factors became the primary, reasons they were hired. This link was reported in 91 percent of the districts.

The cases of two districts, which are similar in size and less than 50 miles apart, illustrate this tendency for districts to hire principals who are perceived to be strong where the former principal was weak. One district's former principal had negative relationships with high school students. It was rumored that a group of male students physically assaulted him in retaliation for his attitude toward students. The new principal in this district said the number one concern during the hiring process was that the principal get along well with students. Less than 50 miles away, a second former principal had been lenient with student behavior problems. The new principal in that school identified strict enforcement of discipline and attendance policies as a strong expectation which

surfaced during his interviews.

Other patterns of expectations were identified from principals' reports of their candidate interviews. In 55 percent (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) of the ten smallest districts, the need for the new principal to effectively discipline students was a strong message. Two other principals (2 and 9) reported that they were expected to involve students more in the school. Principal 11 perceived that he was to focus on improving student attendance and school climate. Principal 8 perceived that he was to improve community relations. Finally, Principal 10 felt he was expected to maintain excellent academic and vocational programs.

Once again, the expectations perceived by principals during their candidate interviews primarily involved student personnel functions, with an emphasis on enforcing discipline regulations. Only Principal 10 perceived that he was expected to lead the instructional program by focusing on staff and curriculum development issues.

Analysis of Broad Patterns and Themes

Several patterns from these principals' reports can be linked to provide a comprehensive view of the expectations principals faced during their first years in a high school. First, it is clear that both superintendents and teachers influence principals' instructional leadership behavior. This finding coincides with other studies which describe systems of central office control of principals (Peterson, 1984; Harrison and Peterson, 1986), and those which found that principals are keenly

aware of teachers' expectations (Foskett, 1963; Lortie, Crow, and Prolman, 1983; Blumberg and Greenfield, 1980; DeFigio and Hughes, 1987). This is an important consideration for schools faced with hiring new principals. Simply giving them the keys to the building may make for a haphazard socialization process, and the results may lead to "hazard," if superintendent and faculty expectations are not congruent.

A second conclusion is that principals receive strong, consistent messages about the need for them to deal with student personnel issues. Although, Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, and Hurwitz (1984) write, "a central, long-standing tenet of the instructional leadership role is that the principal should devote by far the largest portion of the day to direct supervision of instruction and to staff development" (p. 13), the findings of this study indicate that student personnel functions dominate the expectations of teachers and superintendents.

A third conclusion concerns teacher expectations. Overall, teachers sent few messages about curriculum development and staff personnel functions. It may be that, in this way, teachers exercise power over how much principals deal with curriculum and staff personnel issues. Corbett and Rossman (1988) recognize this aspect of teachers' exercise of power. They note,

> they [teachers] can control the flow of information about classroom activities to those with the authority to alter the situation. The result is that teachers often have tremendous ability to induce supervisors to act in ways they ordinarily might not, or more to the point, prevent them from acting at all. (p. 4)

Although all the principals in this study expressed a desire to spend more time supervising classroom instruction, they perceived that teachers expected them to spend most of their time on

discipline and attendance matters. The perceived school norms required that the principal focus on student personnel functions, leaving little time to provide leadership in the areas of staff personnel and curriculum development.

A final conclusion is that the selection process, although brief in duration, influences principals' instructional leadership behavior. Even 16 months after their selection, principals clearly recalled messages they had received during their candidate interviews. Evidently, selection interviews make powerful impressions on principals.

Suggestions for Improving Principal Socialization

These findings and conclusions have implications for the ways school districts ought to prepare for principal successions. First, if organizational socialization begins with the selection process, and if selection interviews significantly influence principals' instructional leadership behavior, districts ought to thoroughly prepare for a principal succession if they want to exploit this period as a time to promote school improvement. Even before posting an opening, school board members, teachers, and administrators ought to be involved in identifying school improvement needs.

This may also be a time to re-evaluate the principal's role, and to restructure it to address school needs in all three instructional leadership areas--staff personnel, curriculum development, and student personnel. Clearly, in order for a new principal to fulfill instructional leadership expectations, the constraints and the available resources need to be identified.

An example from this study illustrates what happens when this is left to the wiles of newcomers. One situation reported by all the principals was that they did not have enough time to adequately supervise teachers. When asked about whether they could increase their time supervising teachers, they all said they couldn't.

The comments of Principals 7 and 9 reflect the feelings of these principals: Principal 9 said, "I'd make more time for those who wanted to do something like this [more involvement in classroom instruction]. There are real constraints, otherwise you would be doing them [additional supervision activities].

Principal 7 said, "I would have to drop something else, if I were to do more here [teacher supervision]."

In other words, these principals, who were largely left on their own to figure out school needs, felt constrained by the expectations of teachers and superintendents. They felt inadequate in the area of instructional supervision because they realized that normative descriptions of the principal's role prescribe a heavy commitment in this area. For them, however, increasing their commitment in this area would be at the expense of accommodating the expectations of teachers and superintendents--something that new principals do at their own peril.

In order for schools to exploit principal successions as times to improve instructional leadership, incumbent organizational members need to identify school needs and structure the principal's role accordingly. Requiring and expecting newly hired principals to somehow find,

evaluate, and address school needs is inefficient at best, and potentially disastrous in situations where improved instructional leadership is the desired effect of a principal succession.

A second suggestion is that teachers should be involved in developing the protocol for the principal selection process. Elsewhere, Anderson (1988) has recommended eight ways that *central office personnel* can help new principals succeed: 1) develop pre-service activities for teachers who are potential administrators, 2) develop sophisticated selection techniques, 3) orient beginning principals, 4) institute a mentor system, 5) facilitate reflective activities, 6) develop a plan for professional growth, 7) structure the beginner's workload, 8) give beginning principals feedback. The findings of this study suggest that a comprehensive socialization program also involves teachers.

The data illustrate that teachers exert powerful influences. The suggestion here is that central office personnel use these influences to reinforce school improvement needs. Greenfield (1984) points out that, "Powerful informal socialization processes within the work settings are very likely to 'wash out' the technical knowledge and skills obtained through part-time study in graduate school." To some extent, central office orientations may also be "washed out" by informal socialization influences encountered during principals' first months in schools. Involving teachers in the selection process recognizes these informal influences, and provides a link between the informal learning which takes place in the work setting and the formal expectations communicated during the selection process. Teachers are the professionals inside the organization, and their

perspectives are critical to principals' socialization.

The point of involving teachers in these ways is not to lessen the impact of central office influences. As Anderson (1988) suggests, central office personnel also need to be heavily involved in the organizational socialization of new principals. The reason to involve teachers in this process is to link district and school instructional leadership expectations. As was suggested earlier, if school norms and district expectations conflict, new principals are likely to find themselves in positions where instructional leadership is imperiled.

Furthermore, involving teachers in restructuring the principal's role, may be one step toward implementing school-based management, a concept which has received considerable support lately. New principals who see that teachers are integrally involved with identifying and prioritizing school needs, in focusing on ways to improve their school, and in socializing new principals, are likely to see teachers as valuable members of a school management team.

A final suggestion is that principal socialization committees should be established after the selection of a new principal. The purpose of this group would be to report to the new principal about school improvement needs, traditions and norms. Involving appropriate teachers, central office staff, and other district administrators in this activity provides a balanced foundation upon which a new principal can act. Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) point out,

> Like it or not, school districts are thus very much involved in the "training" of principals. The informal on-the-job learning that accrues to teachers, supervisors, administrators can be ignored (as it usually is), or utilized. (p. 260)

Instead of leaving principals to fend for themselves during their first months, a socialization committee could provide historical perspectives, explain norms and traditions, and be a resource as new principals begin to lead their schools.

These suggestions are based on the findings that principals are influenced by teachers and superintendents during their first two years in a school, and that district norms and teacher expectations often do not promote instructional leadership in the areas of staff personnel functions, curriculum development functions, and student personnel functions. The organizational socialization of principals ought to be balanced so that the path to school improvement is clearly lit, and not concealed within the guarded assumptions and expectations of teachers, superintendents and school board members. Principal socialization is too important to be left to informal conversations with superintendents, who work outside the school, and interactions between the principal and the most vocal teachers within the school.

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